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Honor Among Women

BY GEORGE GIBBS



IT was no wonder when the crash came that people stared at one another, and when the amazement was over, turned against God for taking an unfair advantage of their credulity.

But the calamity seemed to make little difference—mental, moral, physical—for the damage had been done. Habits had been formed. The belief that the orgy of recklessness would go on forever had changed to a blind determination to carry on and go to the devil hitting on all eight cylinders.

Whitney Fonteney, called Pinky because of the color of the reddish blonde tansure around his bald spot, was one of these irresponsible youngsters spurred by the recklessness of the times and contributing to the gaiety and amusement of a certain number of people who had nothing better to do than run from one party to another, beginning with tea (so called) at Pinky's at six and ending in Harlem or somewhere else in the early hours of the morning. Nobody knew where Pinky got his money. Of course he did a lot of high-class bootlegging—for bootlegging had become a highly esteemed occupation chosen by members of the most distinguished families.

Perhaps the crowd was known as Pinky's circle because Pinky provided most of the liquor it consumed; but it might just as well have been called Margot Stribling's circle, because in spite of the enormity of her youth, Margot had more brains than any of them and a talent for leadership that was not to be denied. Graham Gilson, called GaGa for short, might have had claims to leadership, through his faculty for holding all that was brought to him without becoming in the least intoxicated, thus exciting the constant admiration of all concerned.

There were others not so difficult to fill as Fonteney and Gilson. Joe Naylor had a huge studio furnished elaborately with nothing at all except an easel, a refrigerator, a talking machine and a kitchen table with a zinc top, leaving the vast floor quite vacant. The walls were unspeakable with Joe's Modernist efforts.

Pinky's studio apartment was quite unlike Joe's, with a real piano, chairs, tables and other useful things, including some good rugs and honest-to-God Spanish tapestries hanging over the railing of the gallery. Pinky did not paint; he did not have to paint with a studio like that.

It was the hour of the afternoon which in Pinky's set comes between the hour of having nothing to do but drink a highball and the hour of having nothing to do but drink a cocktail. In other words, it was almost time to be putting aside

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A COMPLETE NOVEL

than necessary. I couldn't help it," Margot said excitedly. "I tried to keep my mind on what you said about going to see an osteopath—but I couldn't think of anything—not even of a chiropractor. That boy was vile. I think if I had had a gun I would have shot him—ugh!" She got up and stood facing her slim figure in the pier-glass.

"Isn't there a chance of Mr. Kienast's coming back?" Amy asked coolly.

"Not a chance. He might forgive me for turning him down, but he'll never forgive me for making him look ridiculous. And I'll never forgive him for being what he is. I couldn't stand Carl Kienast, not for anything. He's just a man—and he's gone. I'd rather starve."

Another sigh. "What's the matter with this newo, Margaret? Sex crazy, that's what it is. What's the matter with you? You're a woman, aren't you? You ought to be able to hear of nothing else in the theater, in books, in life. Maybe if you and I didn't have so much respect for ourselves we might get on—where."

At the winter palace he seemed to be a different man. He was more sympathetic now to haughty but kind the rest of her days. She was to see it, being so close to him, and she was to see it later by the position of other men.

What was the use of thinking of him? He was not a man to be thought of. But she couldn't help it. The spectre of Helena persisted, the spectre of the woman who had been so kind to her. It seemed to have existed. The spectre of Helena persisted, the spectre of the woman who had been so kind to her. It seemed to have existed. The spectre of Helena persisted, the spectre of the woman who had been so kind to her. It seemed to have existed.

It was curious, too, in spite of this, the attraction that she now seemed to have for all men. Her coldness seemed to be a constant challenge to their vanity. Or was it something else—some new elemental force that had become a part of her?

She knew that she was handsome enough (if not for motion pictures), that she could be gay and comely by turns, but there was, in the admiration she drew, a quality that she had not noticed before. She was beautiful, rich and carefree. If her affair with Bruno had made her bitter, it had also made her deeper and more significant. She had played a part, and she knew the rules of the game—not from the fashionable crowd that she used to know, just men of the world who belonged nowhere except where there was the most to be had for the least money.

She thought of her mother's friends or of the members of the younger set.

The girl that she had known was very sympathetic but their sympathy was impractical. "Oh, darling, we heard about your trouble! It's perfectly filthy the way Fortune has treated you, and times are awful hard. I've wondered how I could help, but dad is so worried about everything I've been thinking seriously of going to work myself. That would be fantastic, wouldn't it? Are you going about any? I do hope you'd be at Mrs. Wyngate's transference at Crystal Key. Not going? So sorry. Bye, Margaret darling!"

Amey said that she was a fool to take life so seriously. Margaret wasn't the only girl to have an unfortunate love affair. These things happened. The world was beginning to realize that a woman had some privileges. Margaret knew that Amey was lying to save Margaret's face, but she made no com-

On occasion there were lots of really nice girls that Margot used to know, but they were all busy in the Junior League or going to meetings or getting married or something like that, so she never saw them. So she still went to the old crowd at Pinky Penkney's, for here at least she could find amusement and the companionship that she needed. She had lost her money and had given up painting swollen women. Gage was as ingratiating as ever but Pinky's business still prospered. There was always a drink if anybody wanted it. Lily Stueck had given up Doc Randall and taken up a very attractive Spanish dancer.

er but her acting was just as bad as ever. Muriel Bishop had gone "nuts" on some new religious cult and was seen no more.

SOMETHING seemed a little wrong with Amy—Amy had gone around to the “Incomparable” Reading, a few days after Horowitz’s unfortunate last-ride, in a state of shock, unable to get another night with Mr. Klement, not sure as Marge’s future was cleared, the visit was a failure. Mr. Klement refused to reconsider giving her the contract. He had made a mistake in thinking Miss Scilling could wait and after showing the last-terms to Mr. Wallstein that gentleman had said, “I am not interested.”

That Mr. Klement had been very polite, had even shown her to lunch in the Company’s Coterie restaurant, but there was no hope that Marge got in pictures, he said, no hope that she could see, with any of the companies.

[illegible]

Margot decided that she would have to do something at once—any act, any appeal. Her memory from that time is a dimming of pearls that her father had given her. She not yet exhausted, but her father at the other studios to obtain a position even as an "extra" had to know her how difficult her battle for her father's name. She decided not to go to her mother whose death she surplus must go to help Harvey Junior into college. Amy told her that if the worst came to the worst that she could be found for her father at the given quarter in the Conquest. But the worst had not come to the worst—at least, not yet. For the worst of course would be the necessity for an appeal to George. But she and this, she decided, could only be if all other means were exhausted.

He was the head of a large import-export house and she found him on the lower west side, which she had visited on a child, in a locality of old buildings smelling deliciously of coffee and very rich of hidden art treasures.

[illegible][illegible]

not be relying upon Army Reserve more than a few days longer.

There was a position that had been made vacant by the death of a old prisoner long in the hospital. He had thought of her, but he realized that she had already made some satisfactory arrangements on her own. The work was arduous but not difficult. If she would accept that position he might intend to pay her twenty-five dollars.

Margot was so delighted that, in a burst of gratitude, she threw her arms around Cosson Walker's neck and kissed him tenderly.

"That's all right, my dear," I said, shaking gently. "Glad to hear you. I think Aunt Sophie treats you abominably."

The little man's grey eyes brightened and he held Margot's hand and looked at her with real affection.

"And Cousin Anne?" she asked. "She doesn't like me, you know. Do you think she would approve of my being here?"

"H-m." Cousin Walter made wily grin. "Uptown's one we Margot; downtown's another. And never comes here. She dislikes the smell of the bides. I think they remind her of the slaughterhouse across the railroad tracks from where she was born."

And now if you'll come with me I'll turn you over to Mr. Wilson, a foreman, who will show you about your new job."

It was absurdly easy, sitting at a little window and keeping a record—horribly monotonous, but easy. She was sure that she could do anything her octogenarian predecessor had done. She was to start for work the following Monday.

"Where are you going to live?"
"In the village, I've been looking at a daisy little room. It will be nearer my job."

"Really? Do you realize I've been here almost three months? I never forget what you've done for me."

They embraced. This was, however, the end of the chapter. Margaret and the boys diverged. Margaret's world was below Fourteenth st. Andy's above. Margaret was too tired to go anywhere at night. She managed to come once to Margaret's "ducky" little room. Andy didn't know it. He kept it empty, not until a month later when Margaret saw Andy getting out of a taxi at the door of a restaurant in the West End square district with Carl Korman. She was so much wiser she ran under the bridge where she and Andy had been. She had had perhaps a passing there before. Margaret had separated. Carl Korman

And then she remembered the first visit Mr. Klemin had paid Amy's apartment and his interest in her tapestries, her jewelry and her clothing. Had her wealth bothered Mr. Klemin? Quite possibly. And had Amy flared Mr. Klemin's cheek angrily? He was, in a way, unique. On Amy's part it might be, perhaps, the collector instinct.

Three circumstances were later confirmed when she saw Joe Nay, who came down to the village square with...

supper with her. The old crew was all basted up. And would he get please marry him? He had nothing left but a few broken memoranda of marginal account, but he still had a good disposition and had made up his mind to go back into illustration where he might make some regular money as he had once done before his uncle had died and let him go to the armist. It was the same old story with Joe, but she didn't want

IF these reports, she had been true, then indeed their friendship between Margot and Margeit was finished. Meanwhile the arrangement at Cousin Walt Brinkling's importing house had proved very satisfactory. She did not make much money and was not with roommates, meals and carfare there was not a great deal left over at the end of the week for clothing or other expenses.

Her relations with Constance White were of the pleasantest and she would have been willing to shorten her acquaintance with the girl, but the duties were difficult to say any day

he said. Margot had refused to accept any favors and stuck to her job at the little window like a leech. She was a kind of peech-hah her department and had to cheer up a multiplicity of important visitors with care and enthusiasm. She had thought twice to commit her mother to a rest cure to her job and her employer, the reasons being obvious to Mrs. Strikling who understood the dominant traits of the adorable Anna, her Margot's mother, had recently suffered her severe approach for Harvey Strikling.

Margot had no fear of her Co. Anne and would have liked nothing better than an opportunity to hear exactly what she thought of snobbish and shabby pretenses she would have liked, usefully, in order, to add her way she did like the sound of Midge—and if prejudice was really the reason for being vegetarian. But she was too grateful to Walker Striding, fond of him to create an occasion that might add in any way to his unhappiness.

She could see that Cora's father's life in the apartment town was not all that he made it out to be. He was a little man, and Anne had taken advantage of his mildness. He married too late in life, he and Margot, and the girls were paid the debt of life when they got married. He had been a part of their own. Margot knew it quite well—Lucy, the elder, dandified and temperamental, a real like her mother; and Joan, the younger, quiet and temperamental, a real like her father. It was a slight irony. Like her father's, she got on beautifully with Joan; there were moments when his and Lucy got so much on his nerves that he was glad to get back to a smell of coffee and roses and a woman's but phoned round the office.

And so, at Cousin Walter's invitation, Margot got into the bath, stopping in at his private office for a cup of tea at the close of business before returning to Green Village. This was a very pleasant break in the day's work, a pick-up before the tiresome ride up

Here she and Cousin Walter
gave, for the first time, to
acquaintance with each other.

told her about Joe and Pinky George and the redoubtable Klump. As Cousin Walter said, "I was the only one of her life exactly what she said." He told her that if she didn't, George be was glad she had married him. Marriage without love was a waste of time. He got along with a man for 50 years even when you began by loving him. Anne was throwing Louis the head of a drunken little bear, just because he had military medals and a few dollars in his pockets. "I was a little bit of a habitual carnivore, for how much he yielded to her in other domestic matters, he had put his head down and let her do as she pleased up against his marriage to me."

Margot discovered that her C in Walter was a distinguished T. L. in Walter, a collector of first editions of the Victorian novels and poets. He was in brief, an idealist. He aimed the edge of his mind, among other things, at the past and dreamt of what life should have been. All the world instead of what it is. At first she thought he was too far a great deal with his tales of adventure in book collecting; but she discovered that he was really a love of books and a collector of her school days that she thought she had forgotten.

There were other things that he got would rather have done than talk about books with Cousin Walter, but there was something very friendly and comforting about the old fashioned office with its glow of candleal when the afternoon grew chill and its comfortable brown leather chairs. It was a little house than anything that had known since she had left library in the Strickling home.

great deal of work for himself and his family from about a week or so, since almost all of daily occurrence they spent in the vicinity there. They spoke of the visit there as being similar to Communist tactics of the various runoffs of the family and made fun of the heavy-duty, Communist Wallingford, who was a very good friend and told her of incidents in the younger days that she had not heard of before. He said that he had been in the neighborhood of the regular bar in the north, or came himself into her little fields. And when she went in, he would be there, and he would account the next day for her next of him.

She understood the situation perfectly. After a visit, at his house, Mr. was under the strain of the

ly as a man to replace the affection at home to which he entitled. Margaret wondered how Cousin Anne would say it. She knew that Cousin Walter would tell her almost every day, but she had always abominated Cousin Walter from several times. Cousin Walter had despised her, but Cousin Anne had a suspicious mind. . . . She was that Cousin Anne would not understand their relationship was all so kindly on paper, friendly as he had. Margaret could not help but think that Cousin Anne

While no parties as something the nature of an intriguer, the the Blumington Anne would discover as long as the adol- hodes persisted in the waist and neighborhood Margot did ing to encourage his stay at office and frequently had to re- hines that it was time to go up- And since they had established kind of brotherhood of conspi- she told him one day of her love- hurns. The would get tell her

"Poor child," he said, "you've had a hard time, haven't you?"

"Oh, I'll worry through a howl," she said with a dry laugh. "but I won't marry a lousy drunkard or an idiotist. I will be just as unapproachable with you as with another."

He grinned at her cheerfulness.

"Oh, some day the right man will drift along."

"You will. Sometimes hope is just around the corner—like finding you, my dear. How could I know you and I were going to be so much fun together. I would do something to help."

Walter Stribling's snide twang, reminiscent of the country-

up one side of his mustache, his eyes narrowed with a knowing amusement.

"Of course, we couldn't let anyone, could we?"

Mr. Trollope together—or Jane Austen

WALTER seemed to do this in this masquerade clandestine affair. He was very mysterious, when he told Cousin Anne and his daughter that he had married Margot to dinner with her at the Lafayette and to the music. And all the evening he insisted on playing the part of doing some good deed for her. He shouldn't be. Perhaps, poor fellow, he thought he was doing some good deed for her. He shouldn't do. Margot had him and carried on the action. He held hands in the dark and with a very casual smile he told her that he was going to be a doctor. She told him that she was a stenographer and dashed guiltily in a taxi in the fear that he would not arrive at the apartment.

But it was a game that M...
warried of playing and Sat...
afternoons and Sundays, she...
out with Pinky for drives to...
the city, and she was a "G...
by accident on Fifth Avenue...
they had a walk in the Park...
was extremely kind and they...
to the theater together a few...
He asked her again if she w...
marry him and she declined...
He couldn't understand why...
wouldn't because he had been...
towed to Walter Stripling's...
and seen her at her little w...
with the arm protectors on...

he had smelted the hopes.

"Given marriage to me might prefer to that, Margot," he said. "I'm married."

"You may think I'm George," she said, "but I like you."

"In other words," he laughed, "you'd be more gaily if you knew me."

They were still very good friends. But busy times and circumstances never entered much into his calculations. But he wanted him and he thought that if he was patiently and long enough he could get her.

While Margot worked industriously at her job, it was arduous was monotonous, but she could say that she actually disliked it. At least she was helping a body. She got along because she was a woman, and a woman in a white suit, Metropolitan

head bookkeeper and a sentimental fiancée, who pay her the little stipend of a small brood of flowers brought from his little garden in the country. The office was a world in miniature, but it was a very pleasant world and it bred in her with more consideration than the great world outside had done.

Margot met her mother in the late afternoon when it was still Mrs. Strikling, of course, had been very much depressed and disturbed by the change in her fortunes and for a month or more after her return home camp with Aunt Adelaide had wandered the streets window-shopping miserably and deploring her lot. Margaret, Aunt Adelaide had proposed to her, for the first time, to share her small apartment and pay a proportion of the cost, and Mrs. Strikling had accepted immediately and gratefully. She did not see Margaret often, for Aunt Adelaide's apartment was miles from the village, and it was not a very pleasant place for Margaret to visit, especially since Aunt Adelaide had just learned that her husband of her obstinate niece since she had refused the business office of George's niece, Aunt Adelaide about the conditions of the sister in respect to Margaret's job at Cousin Walter Strikling's office.

It was Margaret's mother, of course, who let the cat out of the bag.

A day before Christmas, she reached the apartment of the Walter Striklings where, Anne Strikling being out, she sat for a moment talking to Lucy who had just come in from a taxi.

"Of all her relatives only the Walter Striklings seemed in the least prosperous she remarked to Lucy at one point in the flood of gossip.

"That Mother was always complaining that she hadn't even money enough to living me out properly this month," Lucy put in.

"Really? How extraordinary! Why Margaret told me—"

The poor little passed in dismay, her expression immediately reflecting the curiosity of Lucy Strikling.

"Margot! What could Margaret know about Father's business?"

"Well, you see—oh dear," she gasped, "I shouldn't have told you."

"What is it Cousin Mildred? I'm sure you can tell me. I never breathe a word to a soul about anything. You were saying that Margaret told you?"

Lucy examined the old lady narrowly. "What I want to know is how Margaret knows so much about our affairs? Tell me, Cousin Mildred."

"She was a rather tremendous young person and so insist that Margaret's mother was entirely at a loss."

"Well, Margaret is working at your father's office," she said desperately at last.

"I wonder why Father did not say anything to Mother about that?"

"Well, you see, Lucy dear, your mother never liked Margaret."

The old lady rose hurriedly. It was a retreat in the face of a social attack. "Lucy dear, I shouldn't have told you, your mother is difficult about some things, very difficult. It may make trouble for your father. Please promise me that you'll say nothing to your mother about Margaret."

"Of course, dear. Not to Mother, not a word. But if Father is making all that money, believe me, Aunt Mildred, I'm going to get a slice of it."

"It may all be a mistake, Lucy. I shouldn't have told you. Good bye, my dear, give my love to your mother."

Then it was that in a day or two Lucy, having been unable to keep her secret, told her mother what she had heard, and at the precipitous

moment Mrs. Strikling ordered her car and drove, post haste, in a state of high determination, to the offices of her husband's office.

At Walter Strikling's door she paused a moment. There were sounds of movement and voices in conversation. She entered quickly and stood like an excited poodle. Before the fireplace were Walter Strikling and Margaret, with the glow of the fire reflected in their laughing faces. The fingers of Margaret's left hand were in Walter Strikling's right hand. Margaret's right hand held a tall glass. Walter Strikling's left hand held a tall glass and both glasses were steaming and emitting an odor of brandy and snuff. Upon the table was an escaped Christmas box of woman's silk stockings. And in a velvet case a woman's wrist watch.

As he looked up, Walter Strikling glanced and almost dropped his glass at the sight of the figure in the doorway. For the company he had been invited to play at had just reached its dramatic conclusion, Margot turned her head, grinning cheerfully.

"Hello, Cousin Anne, what on earth is the matter?"

Mrs. Strikling gave her a look of contempt and turned toward her husband, who was scrambling to his feet with all the grace of a frightened camel.

"What does all this mean?" His wife's voice broke in his mouth. "Answer me!"

"Why, nothing at all. Didn't you know—it's Christmas Eve?"

"Christmas Eve—hah! How long have these secret meetings taken place here? It's disgraceful—utterly disgraceful of you both."

Margot had risen and put her glass upon the table.

"And you, you shameless creature—"

"Wait a moment, Cousin Anne. I don't mind saying to you I do not. But I'm not going to stand here and have you insult me."

"What has Cousin Walter done?" Margot protested loudly. "You're just making yourself ridiculous!"

"Hidiotism! You dirty little—"

The foul word was never uttered. "Anne, I forbid you!" Cousin Walter's voice had risen to a sharp and very shrill falsetto. It was a note that he did not remember that he possessed.

"My beginning to understand why you've been so late at the office—why you've found it necessary to take trips to other cities, Anne flung out. I understand why you didn't let me know that you had been Margaret Strikling into your employ. Because you thought I would mistreat or punish her away. You had a guilty conscience about what you had done and were doing. Having decided not in the beginning you tried it out to deceive me again and again with this girl, you know

the kind of creature she was before you engaged her, a spend-thrift like her father, a wastrel who gave up her own moral crowd because they weren't fast enough for her and took up with a lot of disreputable—"

"Stop! Margot sat in anger. "That's enough from you. I've always loved it have a chance to tell you exactly what I thought of you and now—"

"Margot! Cousin Walter pleaded softly. "It can do no good."

Margot turned back with a shrug. "Oh, very well. * * I won't say it."

"No, you'd better not," said Anne Strikling. "If I'll ask you why Anne Monmouth was away from you, so soon as your money was gone?"

It was a random shot, rather stupid, meant rather to sting than to kill, a shot aimed wildly by a woman seeking any weapon to be used against an adversary. And it hit the mark, for Margot stared quickly, her face as white as chalk. What did Anne Strikling know? Good lord! Nothing, of course. Nothing. There was no way in which she could have learned Margot's secret.

Margot smiled then and spoke in her sweetest voice. "Did you know Bruno? How nice! And then you said the women said nothing more. She had no weapons—Margot was silent, even just the glimpse of a disarray table, which meant nothing."

If Cousin Anne had known how terribly she had aroused her, she would have guessed it by the tale she had looked at Margot at that moment. Instead, she relinquished the quarrel.

And then she went to her door and addressed her husband.

"You seem so pleasant here, you'd better not bother to come home. I'll stay here tonight, making the cheap garters of spinning it in their faces."

"And that's that!" said Margot. She was smiling at the smile with Cousin Walter. She was smiling at the fantastic aspects of the situation, her when she turned to him, his face still were a look of utter helplessness and bewilderment. Like a young long plaid, which continues to ripple for awhile after it has been agitated, Cousin Walter's mouthed a remark. "My husband's misadventure."

"Tis so sorry, Margot," he said at last.

Margot took her glass and said, "Thank better about this, Cousin Walter," she said, "but it's not going to be a very nice Christmas for us, I'm afraid."

"No, it won't be nice. And nothing to excuse what she said about you."

"Of course, she thinks I've led you astray," Margot said with a smile. "But I'm sure she'll be able to finish this drink with me. I'll be to it!" It will probably be our last party, Cousin Walter."

"Margot! he gasped, as she nearly swallowed the wrong way. "My dear child, you mustn't think of leaving. She was very much excited, she didn't mean what she said."

"Oh yes, she did. She has hated me for years; she wanted to believe the worst of me—and of you. How silly!"

"It's the first time she has been here in 15 years," he said almost weeping into the bottom of his glass. "But I've told and told his fingers on her arm. 'Margot,' he started again, 'you're not to leave my employ. You've got to promise me that, do you hear. Don't you understand? Anne has a principle to Anne's foolishness a great principle is involved. If I stay you away, everybody would think that her principles were founded on a fact, impossible! It can't be done. You are going to stay. I'm even going to promise you, too, do you understand?"

She put an arm around him and led him toward the door.

"Yes, I understand. We'll see about that Christmas, Cousin Walter. But you'd better go home now and make your peace with the family. It won't be much fun, but you've got to do it right away."

"Yes, I-I suppose I'll better."

He took the hat she handed him. "How silly of her," he muttered. "How damned silly to think that you and I—why we used to read Trojans together, did we?"

"Yes, And Jane Austen."

"Tilly of her. But I think I'll go home—and tell her about everything."

"Yes. Hadn't you better call a taxi?"

"No," he answered. "No taxi, I want to walk. I'm fresh air. Good-bye, Margot. I'll see you after Christmas."

Margot went back into the inner office and sat for a moment looking into the fire, thinking of what she had better do. Cousin Anne would never give Walter a mother's peace at the apartment or elsewhere, so long as Margot remained in his office. Anne Strikling had shown a hatred so violent that she had forgiven for a few moments that she was a Social Register person with two marriageable daughters and became again Anne McMahon who had lived in a small Mid-Waters town across the railroad tracks from the daughter-house. Why should she hate Margot so? Surely she could



not believe all the vile things she attributed to Madame. Her fury at the sight of these was based on something even more vital than this—the recognition of the fact that Gessie Walker had found at last some kind of real happiness away from his wife. Who had told the woman of Countess Walker's attentions to her? Anna Adeline? Or Margaret's mother? Or course she heard about Bruno's attentions; and Lucy she remembered had been rather keen (from a distance) about him herself.

Margot closed the window, took up her Christmas presents, then went to her office to retrieve her coat, but and some other articles that belonged to her. She gave the night watchman a Christmas greeting (all the others had gone home) and went out into the street. She walked feebly across to the lighted street in the midst of life, confusion and the Christmas spirit.

Christmas! Since her misadventure she had tried to be philosophical, but a temptation to recall the same day and hour of the past was overwhelming. At the Emporium's, then a Christmas tree at Joe's studio where one of the models had danced and everybody had gotten rather tipsy.

That was even before Bruno had appeared—before her father had died and Strikling and Company had failed. * * * It was strange that life should be like that—that so many intimately horrible things could happen with such a casual air. That was the dreadful part of it all, the cruel, indifferent way that life went on and would go on—even her own, no matter what happened.

And now she realized that for so apparent reason life had again deprived her right to exist as she planned, even though she did not have to anyone. That Margot realized that, no matter what happened in the interview between Countess Walker and his wife, she had left the office for the last time. Poor Countess Walker, so quiet and so efficient with his office days, but so futile against his wife! Well, that was that, as she had said before. There were other jobs, of course. There was always the glove counter at The Emporium. But perhaps Amy wouldn't help her now . . .

LUCY STRIKLING and her mother, whatever their differences in character or temperament, had one trait in common—the desire to get on in the world.

It was this wish to improve her condition that had induced Anne McElhanna, the leader of the young or social set in Mackinac, to invite her to marry a millionaire, a big business man of New York whom she had met one summer at Atlantic City; for he belonged, she knew, to a wealthy and influential family who might help her into the place in the world to which she believed she was entitled. And Lucy, also a good eyed, clear, but rather plain looking girl, had loved and married it on toward the goal. That it was that Lucy—no matter what her fancy for the good looking, imperious sailors whom she preferred to encourage the attentions of the drunken Delaney boy because of his millions. But she had kept a watchful eye to windward too when George Pincus, a man from Lane & Co. came to the office and, once or twice at dances this season, had paid her some attention. Of course she knew that George Pincus was a very serious young man, little addicted to girls and quite different from "Ipec" Delaney, who liked to live up on his legs and was known to have loved her more when he was slightly "joggled."

Both Lucy and her mother were



"So that's the kind you are," he said, cold and

conscious, deciding if possible to destroy George Pincus's faith in such a creature, to undermine, by any means in her power, the affection which stood as a barrier to her plans for Lucy. Her reason for her hatred had grown, too, in the recollection of Walter Strikling's wild if futile efforts in defense of Margot and himself. How far he had gone with the girl she did not know or care.

"Of course Margot couldn't understand you, George," she said maliciously. "She is a sweet girl but with such a terribly unpractical bringing up." This was the sort of thought she used with him, a compliment and a slap for Margot with always an underlying note of praise for George.

And then, a little later when she was sure that she had completely gained his confidence: "The always admired Margot's independence," she said cautiously, "but she ought really to have had some one to advise her. Lucy would have been very wise if I hadn't talked to her sensibly about things. But Margot's independence is not the sort to accept herself; you know how she is, of course . . . very amiable, very facile. . . . So Margot went her own way, really with that terrible crowd at Whitney Post's, that deplorable artist—what's his name . . ."

"Napier." And that Ronsky girl whose father went that cheap department store uptown, The Emporium, that dreadful actress person, Lily Nichols, and Graham Gilson—good enough family but haven't drawn a sou' since that time. That was hardly the crowd for a girl of Margot's blood and views of life."

"And what her rights. I am a bit stupid, you see."

"Yes—stupid! Really, George! Anne Strikling drew back, her eyes narrowed so though to examine him better and then laughed in petty derision.

"Perhaps, George, you're only stupid by comparison with Margot. Of course, she has worried her mother almost to death with her friendship for strange people, her—(what I say?)—associations with dissipated men. I know of George. Mrs. Strikling passed off effectively as though her restraint was even more charitable than necessary, 'but what's the use of it?' That sort of thing passed for sincerity when she was rich and her father powerful, but since she has lost all her money, she has been practically ostracized by her family."

"Really? I can't understand that. Mrs. Strikling," he said, sure of his right now to betray Margot's secret in her defense, "when your husband took her into his office—Anne Strikling had not expected the center-thrust, but she was prepared for it."

"I suppose I've got to tell you, George, though it is one of the most unfortunate incidents in my married life. My husband and I have lived together for over 20 years in perfect accord, without a word of disagreement about anything. Until just before Christmas we never had a misunderstanding. And then—"

She paused again with obvious pain. "Then one day I found out that Margot Strikling was at the office and that things were not as they should have been. I—I went down there and—and surprised them in a—well—a most intimate relationship." Another moment of painful hesitation and then: "We think you are too free to go on deceiving yourself any longer about Margot. Why should he be running down a member of my husband's own family if I did not think it necessary for your own good? Margot is not worthy of you—is not worthy of the love of any good man—"

George Pincus had risen and taken up his hat. He could not stay any longer listening to Margot being reviled. Even if what Anne Strikling had told him was the truth he would much have preferred not hearing it. He remembered, too, several things that he had not been able to understand. Why had there been any necessity that Margot be in her being in Walter Strikling's office unless Anne Strikling had told the truth? His faith in Margot in spite of the gossip he had heard about her and his faith in her was running out of him. Poor George Pincus, seemed to parting discomfiture of this sort himself, could not conceive of any one practicing it upon him for any purpose whatever.

Anne Strikling wished him to go out. Even if it was difficult for him to believe everything that she had told him, she knew that she had achieved her purpose for the present.

MARGOT never meant actually what had happened at the Strikling's apartment upstair after the visitation of Anne Strikling at the office on Christmas Eve. She was sure, in spite of Walter Strikling's subsequent visits to the Village, that she had made no mistake in giving up her position. He gave evidence on his last visit of having been completely vanquished by his family and so Margot asked him not to come to the Village to see her any more.

Anne Strikling had had the last word and Margot had relinquished her only chance of telling her exactly what she thought of her. The remark that she had made that she was of Cora's Walter and the job it was curious how badly things had been going with her ever since she had tried to become of some use to the world.

And now, what? Her alternative seemed to be two—the glove counter at The Emporium or marrying Joe. She had given up all thought of George Pincus, and since then she had met by chance while she was walking in the Square two weeks ago. She had asked him if he couldn't find her a job in his office but he had given her little encouragement. Something funny had happened to George. His eyes were more honest than his mouth. He was not over, but they were being differently. The kindness that shone in them was the kindness of pity. He thought it would be very painful for her to go to his office but whether painful for Margot or for him he did not say. He folded with his gloves and otherwise did not say a word.

There were reasons why she did not care to speak to Amy about a job at The Emporium, for Amy and Margot were so definitely enemies that to be married.

It would be very unpleasant to be relegated to the glove-counter at The Emporium where Mr. Klemm might . . . So she began following the ad-

have or be different than me. But I never realized it until I found the man I wanted to hear my children for. That's the agony I've suffered all these weeks."

"Margot—don't!"

"I've got to talk it all out. There can't be a single thought about me unexpressed to you. This is my confession, my misdeeds—once and for all time. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Margot."

She waited breathless for the words that he could not seem to utter, the clasp she had no right to hope for that from him now. He turned toward her suddenly.

"What's the use, Margot?" he said huskily. "The man is dead. He's dead. There's no use talking about him any more."

His voice was almost cruel. He may have guessed the truth last night, but the definition of her words, the reality of her trouble, had cut deep.

"All right, Eric. I'll say no more about it. And now please tell Finley I'm ready to go down to the inn at Schwanden."

The silence of the night brought philosophy and calm. It brought charity too, a charity, perhaps, which would have been more difficult with Rene alive. And after a little while Eric found himself in a mood of great humility. A wave of tenderness swept over him at the thought of the sleeping girl upstairs waiting all the afternoon for the word of gentleness that he had not had the courage to speak.

All men had their codes—warriors, their also—the new women, the new codes to suit their new needs from life. But whatever that code, the world whirled on, making the women who broke the law as it had always done and letting the men go free.

Only as a clear part of ethics than any modern code or any Victorian tradition. Margot had suffered—was suffering now. Tomorrow he would ask her to forgive him. Then he would ask her to go with him to Geneva where they would be married. Rene could not step between them then. " "

He must try to get a few hours of sleep.

HE HAD taken Margot's presence in the hotel for granted but, when he lay in bed, he thought she ought to go back to school at once. Adelaide said, "But she left this note for you, Eric."

He took it open and read:

"It was very terrible for you, Eric. I had to tell you. But, of course, I have to go away now."

"Goodbye," Margot.

He stared at the familiar handwriting, stupefied for a moment with the shock of her decision. And then his thoughts, working quickly, seemed to understand that there had been nothing else for her to do. He had given her no choice to believe in his forgiveness, no inkling of any change in spirit, which was now ready to accept her gladly as any terms.

After some delay he found a man with remarkable automobile and, mingling Margot's which seemed precisely to the Berlin, he left Schwanden with Adelaide Brown at a little before eleven.

Adelaide Brown smoked her cigarette with great contentment. Aware of the fact that was Eric she did not know what had happened to separate these lovers, both of whom were friends of hers. Eric swore at the Berlin, in English, French and German, but it did not do much to hurry him.

"No use, Eric. I'm sorry. I would have stopped Margot if I could. But she wouldn't listen. She was ter-

ribly anxious to leave. Is there anything that I can do?" I mean when we reach Vevey."

"No, nothing. It's all my fault. I'd give anything in the world if I could only want to listen to me."

"I like you both so much, Eric, dear. I don't know what Rene's relations with Margot were, but I don't like him. I'm naturally curious to know what you said to him on the Weissenhorn."

"He was annoying Margot," Eric said with set lips after a moment.

"And then he stopped. Thank God you didn't touch him."

"Yes, that was a lucky break for me. We might both have gone over."

When they reached the school Eric found Madame Villars in the hallway downstairs. Margot had left more than an hour before Madame said, having asked for some money and hurriedly packed a bag which one of the boys had carried for her to the steamer landing.

"What are you going to do?" Adelaide asked, worried.

"I don't know, she said. I'm going to Geneva, she said. I've got to take it. But—there's no train for more than an hour."

"She may get off the boat at Yverdon. She had a friend—"

"Evelyn Jones. She isn't at Yverdon any longer."

"I'm gambling on meeting her at the steamer landing at Geneva to save her from doing something foolish—"

The Berlin had carried in the rest of the luggage and Eric said he had to drive to Geneva.

Such recent speed did Eric make that they reached the Quai de Mont Blanc at Geneva before the arrival was in sight. Of course there was still a chance that Rene had deserted the steamer at Yverdon or one of the ferries on the north shore, but the boat had been told not to stop at Lausanne, which was on the Steissberg Road to Paris.

As the boat moved toward the Quai he took a position where he could observe without being seen. The steamer was in sight, as apparent for when he saw it with its funnel down the compass, was turned white and even went ahead but he caught her by the arm, took her hand that she carried and led her ashore. There was something authoritative in the way he took charge of the situation.

She was very tired and beyond any resistance. He did not seem to have any plans except to go to a hotel and rest. So he took her to the hotel and rest. By where they had in a deserted place overlooking the lake, the Steissberg Mountain and the distant point of Mont Blanc.

"Margot," he said, "Margot, ma, can you tell me where she is?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "I would tell you."

"I can't have you saying it. Up there in the Ofenbach you gave me every chance. I deserve to have lost you. Where were you going?"

"I don't know."

"I'm afraid if I leave you for a minute you'll run away from me again."

She smiled. "I don't seem to be running very fast now," she said quietly.

"How you do forgive me?"

"What else can I do since you're here?" Oh, Eric, you don't know what I've suffered. I've tried to tell you."

"God knows I do. Up there in the Ofenbach."

"A little broader still by what I happened. I was off my mind thinking that Rene had wounded you. It was frightful. But that doesn't matter now. I've grown—"

"I'm sorry—"

"I'm sorry—"

"I'm sorry—"

"I'm sorry—"

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